

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Justin Champagnie

Media Conference



Knicks 136, Wizards 132 (OT)

Q. What do you think made the difference for them?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Made a difference for them? I think they're a really experienced team. I think that they've been in a lot of games like that, especially the players and stuff like that, so they kind of use their experience to probably get the upper hand on us, but I think that as a team, we fought and we pushed through.

We made our own little mistakes down the stretch that we could have -- I don't know how to say, but reversed and gave ourselves a better chance to win, but I'm proud of what we did out there. We went out there and showed that we can hang with the best of them.

Q. Obviously a career night for you offensively. What led to that?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Again, like I always tell you, I just trust in myself, believe in my work. My teammates believe in me, my coaches believe in me. I put in a lot of pain for this. Just going out there, believing in myself and just letting it fly and just being confident.

Q. How do you consider yourself as a shooter? Do you consider yourself to be reliable from three? Is that something you aspire to be?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah. I think that I put in a lot of work on my shot. That's been a main focus for me since I've been in the league, knowing that I have to be able to knock down open ones. So just trusting it, believing in it, and consistently put in the reps to make sure when I get my shots out there, it just feels like I'm in the gym at home just chilling.

I consider myself a pretty decent shooter. Obviously I've still got a ways to go, but tonight was -- I felt really confident out there letting it fly.

Q. Did tonight feel like one of those nights where you

were in an empty gym?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Low key. Yeah, low key. I will say that, yeah.

Q. How much are you enjoying the opportunity to show what you can do?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I love it. I mean, I've been waiting for the opportunity to show what I can do for a while. Super thankful to the organization for giving me the opportunity to go out there and do what I do.

When I just got out there, I just trust my work, like overly believe in what I can do and what I can go out there and be, and when I get on the floor, I just let it flow and the game just comes to me. I'm just super loving it, and looking forward to continuing taking advantage of it.

Q. All of us have noticed your offensive rebounding ability, to the point where others were asking that in pregame. Has that always been part of your game going back to high school?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah. I mean, it's actually where -- my mother and a woman that I used to -- her son played AAU with me used to always tell me to crash the glass, and I every time remember her and my mom saying, crash the glass, crash the glass, crash the glass. It's been a part of my game since I was probably seven years old.

But yeah, I put a large emphasis on crashing the glass. I feel like a lot of guys don't want to crash the glass or don't want to guard someone who is willingly throwing their body on the line every possession to try to go get a rebound, and I just take advantage of it. I just have the will power to go out there and go get them, and it helps my team get extra possessions and extra shots, so that's what I'm here to do.

Q. You seem to have a knack for knowing where the ball is going. Where does that come from?



JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: My college coach, Timmy O'Toole, we used to watch a lot of film, just watching where the ball hits the rim and then kind of just trying to anticipate where it's going to go, and then, yeah, just using my instinct and my athletic ability to go get them.

Q. In an unconventional defensive match-up you were put on KAT, and he was able to kind of be KAT but you didn't make it as easy as some teams have had the ability to do that. What was it that you found within yourself in that defensive match-up?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I just had to literally just muster up the energy and the fight to be like, yo, you're not going to score on me easy. You're going to score; he's a superstar, All-Star, great player. But just make his life as hard as possible tonight. I think I did a good job of it. He still scored 30, but I tried my best, and yeah, just believing in myself that I can guard 1 through 5.

I'm a dawg on both ends of ball, and I like to go out there and just show that.

Q. I think in every game you've played this season so far, you've guarded a player bigger than you for the majority of your minutes. Why do coaches have that faith in you? What do you present to them that says he can guard this guy?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I don't really fear much out there. Whether you're seven-foot, 5'5", whatever you may be, I just go out there and play the game I'm supposed to be playing, and whatever match-up I get, I just take it personal in a sense, like okay, coaches believe in me and trust me to go guard this guy and then go out there and give it my all. That's what goes through my mind when I get those kind of match-ups.

Q. What is it like to take those match-ups on and also score a career high in points?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: It's definitely tough playing both sides of the ball and trying to be effective on offense, but I think just mustering -- it's just will power and mindset in my eyes. Just going out there, like I'm tired, I know everyone is tired; we're out there running up and down the floor, but just wanting it more. I haven't had no opportunities, so I'm not going to come out here and complain and cry about some seven-footer, I'm tired, whatever. I'm going to go out there and give it my all every time I'm out there.

Q. What's it like that you and your brother --

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: It's beautiful, man, that's my boy over there. He's been doing his thing. It's a beautiful thing.

We've been dreaming about since we were kids, probably five years old, and it's just a blessing, to be honest, to be on the stage together and both grinding in our respective places.

Q. Did you get a chance to share a moment with him postgame?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: My brother? No, no.

Q. Kind of like a playoff match-up, seeing them again in 48 hours, when you look at as you prepare and look at game film, what does it take mentally to know they're going to make adjustments but you all are, as well, too, to know that that kind of chess match is going to be happening?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Again, like we all follow the game plan that the coaches bring out and we have complete faith in them that they're going to bring out the best for us to go out there and win. I think as players we've just got to go out there and bring the energy.

I feel like energy is the biggest part of the game. Sometimes people get complacent, teams get complacent, and I think just going out there, bringing the energy, bringing the fight to them will be the biggest thing for us to go out there and do the next game.

Q. I don't want to connect dots that shouldn't be connected, but you're obviously a super tough player. Bub is also really tough --

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: That's my boy right there, man.

Q. He's also a really good rebounder for his size just like you are. Do you see any of you in him?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: You know I gotta bring up Pitt. My people is over there. They put a lot of confidence in us, a lot of skill in us and a lot of hard work when we were there, when I was there. I know they did it with Bub, as well. I think it's a Pitt thing, yeah, but I also think Bub was a dawg, as well. I think Bub is cut from that kind of cloth where no matter how the game is going or what people are giving him, he's going to go get it for himself. Showing what did he have, nine rebounds or something like that? I don't know what he had, but he rebounds the ball crazy. That's my boy. He's a dawg on the glass, and looking forward to keep seeing him do that.

Q. How sore, how bruised do you think you'll be after that game?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Oh, tomorrow? I'm hoping it's to

a minimum. I'm not really sure. Big fella, he's a big animal down there; I'm not going to lie to you. But I'll probably have a couple more bruises by tomorrow, but I'll have to ice up, get ready for the next game.

Q. When you go against someone that's bigger than you, do you have to psych yourself up or do something different than you usually would just to be ready for that kind of thing?

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: No, I just go out there, listen to my music pregame, go out in the game and just literally just ramp myself up as the game is going on, like yo, you can't let him score, you can't let him catch it, press him. I literally talk to myself all game long on how I'm going to guard him because he's an All-Star, superstar, so I've got to put a lot of focus into what I'm doing out there when I'm guarding him and how to make it as tough as possible.

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